

**TOWN OF WAITSFIELD, VERMONT**  
**Planning Commission Meeting Minutes**  
**Tuesday, October 1, 2024**

**Members Present:** Beth Cook, Bob Cook, Emma Hanson, AnnMarie Harmon, Becca Newhall, Alice Peal, Jonathan Ursprung

**Members Absent:** None

**Staff Present:** JB Weir, Planning and Zoning Administrator

**Others Present:** Sam Robinson, MRVPD

**II. Regular Business.**

**1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by Jonathan Ursprung. The meeting was held in person at the Town Offices and remotely via Zoom.

**2. Review agenda for addition, removal, or adjustment of any items.**

No revisions were made to the agenda.

**3. Public Forum.**

No members of the public were present.

**4. Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of September 17, 2024 were amended and approved.

**5. Village Master Planning**

Before AnnMarie provided a recap of the September 24 Steering Committee (SC) meeting, there was some discussion of attendance by PC members at the SC meetings. JB indicated that he intends to warn all the SC meetings as PC meetings, but with a caveat that it is not intended that PC business outside of Master Planning work will be conducted; he noted that he will check with VLCT regarding appropriate language to use for these warnings. Jonathan explained that the SC meetings are recorded, and that all PC members may either attend the SC meetings or watch the videos of the meetings. Because of this available access, Jonathan explained that he felt it was not a good use of SE Group time to attend regular PC meetings to recap what has transpired at the SC; instead, he suggested that PC members either attend or watch the SC meetings, and reach out to JB or Jonathan if they felt a need to have Alex come to a PC meeting and review SE Group's progress or answer questions. Bob pointed out that the SC has been tasked as the primary group to focus on this work.

AnnMarie reported that Alex Belenz, Tucker Gordon, and landscape architect Patrick Olstad of SE Group were at the September 24 SC meeting, and that the only SC member not in attendance was Kaziah. She indicated that the goal of that meeting was to ensure that all members of the group are on the same page.

AnnMarie further reported that the project web site is available, in 'soft launch' status, and asked that PC members review the site and offer feedback. Becca noted that the flood plain is now depicted on the web site maps, and there was discussion and confirmation that the Special Flood Hazard Area is the same as the 100-year (or 1%) flood area. Emma noted at one point that she was having difficulty zooming in on the 'past and present efforts' page; it was agreed that some work is

still needed on the site to make it more user friendly, but generally the feedback provided was positive.

AnnMarie then summarized that key points made at the meeting on the 24<sup>th</sup> included that the goal should be to look at the broader context of the Town's investments in wastewater and other infrastructure, and that Irasville is not typically a flood prone area. Thus, Alex has proposed using the low, moderate, and high certainties he has outlined in evaluating the area for development potential.

AnnMarie explained that she had asked Alex to provide his main question regarding the project, and he responded by asking what the Town's relationship to Route 100 is, and whether the Slow Road should be the new Main Street, as the buildings between the two roads primarily do not face Route 100.

An historic photo of Route 100 was included in the meeting materials, which prompted a discussion of both initial development in the town being up on the common, until lumber mills along the river moved the settlement pattern to down along the river. It was then noted that the photo indicated similarities between the earlier concentration of structures along Route 100 and the potential to recreate that feel along the Slow Road, which would also serve to slow down traffic and add some depth to a new 'Main Street,' which might also incorporate a walkway for accessing the businesses and housing along the road. In general, there was positive response to this concept.

AnnMarie noted that other takeaways from the SC meeting are that mixed uses should be highlighted, and wetlands may be presented as an asset rather than a limitation. She also explained that JB has been in regular communication with Shannon Morrison to keep her apprised of the discussions taking place.

Jonathan reiterated his recommendation that PC members keep themselves informed regarding SC efforts, and to provide JB with any questions or feedback that will help to determine if Alex should attend one of the upcoming PC meetings.

## **6. Alice Update**

CVRPC – Alice reported that the Regional Plan work is continuing, with the Land Use and Housing chapters currently in focus. She explained that the presentation planned for a November Waitsfield PC meeting, which was originally going to be on housing, will now be focused on new Act 250 regulations. This will be a follow up to municipalities following a presentation to the Regional Plan committee; this information provides a background for upcoming land use and housing work. She also noted that a conflict between Home Act and Act 250 language regarding development in floodplains has been discovered, and that the legislature will be working on making appropriate adjustments. Alice pointed to other information included in her memo regarding various housing issues and that committees are beginning to understand the need to integrate work across the various topics being addressed. An example is that housing considerations must also take into account flood mitigation needs, and determining how to resolve issues such as outlining where rebuilding should not be an option.

Climate Action Plan – Alice noted that the Public Health task group is also having a consulting role in housing, addressing matters such as the quality of prefabs and other sustainable housing issues such

as energy efficiency and air circulation. The group is also focusing on temperature extremes, disease - both contagious and vector-borne, and mental health.

LHMP – Vermont Emergency Management had provided some feedback regarding revisions needed to the Plan, although Alice noted that in general they were impressed with the work completed, particularly noting that there are now efforts underway to implement the plan through floodplain restoration projects. Alice and Keith Cubbon will be making the needed adjustments to the Plan. In response to an inquiry from Becca, Alice explained that insurance issues have not been discussed, but are an important related topic for future consideration.

Alice explained that she consulted with Ned Swanberg regarding the accuracy of the VWSI wetland layer, noting that lidar is helping to improve the mapping and that ‘boots on the ground’ work such as the studies completed by Arrowwood provides the most accurate depiction.

Alice also reported that the Meadow Road bridge has been lowered to ‘poor’ status, and its condition will need to be addressed.

## **7. Wastewater Planning Project Update**

JB had provided PC members with the report that Joshua Schwartz had written for the Selectboard, which outlines the majority of current updates for the project.

He explained that all the wastewater systems which currently feed into the Mad River Green field are included in the allocation numbers, but noted that it is not yet clear if those properties will be charged an initial connection fee.

JB also noted that the technical team is meeting, and in response to a question from Alice, explained that the pump station which is currently shown as being close to the river will be reevaluated. He confirmed that the FEH overlay does allow for septic uses being located in that area, with State approval, and that the pump station would be built to meet flood standards. However, other solutions are being investigated.

JB also explained that potential funding sources continue to be explored.

Bob noted that the test pit at the leach field has been established, and that the testing work is progressing. He also noted that with the new Engineering Services Agreement in place, DuBois & King are again in high gear, working to have field work completed to the extent possible before winter weather sets in.

## **8. Other Business**

Jonathan provided some updates from the MRVPD; he pointed out that the PD has helped originate some \$8M in grants for the three towns, including a significant portion for Waitsfield projects, since 2009. He also reported that the PD is stepping back from its role in the Mad Bus service, which is undergoing some transition. Jonathan indicated that there will be some degree of service this coming winter, but it is not clear what the funding structure will be. He pointed out that transit is part of the Master Planning work as well.

He also spoke of plans for a flashing crossing light near the school; JB noted that this matter is being addressed by the Selectboard.

It was agreed that no PC meeting will be held on Election Day, and it will be decided on October 15 whether a second November meeting will be necessary.

**9. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 8:48 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Carol Chamberlin, Recording Secretary